

Missouri Military Preparedness and Enhancement Commission
Commission Meeting
January 19, 2006
Senate Hearing Room #1, State Capitol Building, Jefferson City
Meeting Minutes

Members Attending: Dalton Wright, Rep. David Pearce, Kent Thomas, Craig Borchelt, Bob Welling, Loretta Charleston, Rep. Terry Witte, Aaron Washburn for Sen. Koster, Sen. Frank Barnitz, Sharon Gulick

Others attending: Alan Stark for Gen. Sidwell; Ron Taylor and Pat Rowe Kerr, MO Veterans Commission; Rep. Ron Richards; Rep. Barney Fischer; LTC Greg Allison and SFC Melissa Ireland, Missouri National Guard; Col. Alan Stark; Rachel Wheeler; Sgt. Robert Wake; Travis Bartholomew; Dr. Mark Carson (COL USAR); Pat Kerr, Veterans Commission;

Chair Wright opened the meeting and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

Minutes from November 2, 2005 and November 5, 2005 conference call were approved as amended.

Briefing on Family Support training – LTC James Allison, Missouri National Guard

Presented information to the Commission on the actions being taken by the MO National Guard to assist and prepare members of the Guard who are deployed. The State Family Programs works in partnership with the Family Readiness Groups (FRG's) and the units to ensure that service members and their families meet the highest level of readiness. Programs are in place to address needs at various stages of deployment: sustainment, pre-deployment (alert phase/home station), deployment (mobilization), redeployment (demobilization) and post-deployment (post mobilization).

LTC Allison provided Commission members with a copy of the Family Deployment Guide that was developed to consolidate all of the information and forms into a single document for the families. Additional information is available at www.moguard.com

Major General Sidwell discussed the ongoing challenge faced by some returning servicemen with pay. A paper was written outlining the problem and Major General Sidwell will provide the Commission with a copy of the report.

Commission members congratulated General Sidwell on his recent promotion to Major General.

Affects of deployment on Army Reserve components – 89th RRC, Travis Barthlemow, Family Readiness Program of the Army Reserve Component and Dr. Mark Corson (COL USAR)

Mr. Barthlemow estimated that there are about 15,000 reservists deployed from the 4 state (MO NE IA KS). He reported that they are experiencing some of the same problems that Gen. Sidwell cited with the challenges in providing support for families when the units are made up of reservists from multiple states and cited a recent unit from Wichita KS that had members from 30 states. Mr. Barthlemow provided an overview of the services provided through his office, which are very similar to the services and programs described by LTC Allison.

As an example, he contrasted the services available in Iowa and Missouri. Iowa has only a few programs that provide services to servicemen compared to what Missouri has in place. The presence of these support programs will help increase the number of units in Missouri – an example is the new unit in Springfield.

A letter from Major General Rita Broadway was read citing the efforts by the Family Ombudsman Program and Ms. Pat Kerr with the Missouri Veterans Commission.

Dr. Corson, appearing as a private citizen, discussed the Missouri Veterans Commission Ombudsman Program and its impact on service members, veterans and their families. They are recommending that Nebraska and Iowa create a similar program. He also discussed the change in the Reserves to more than the traditional 1 weekend a month.

Dr. Corson also raised the issue of military leave for state employees. The State of Missouri currently provides 10 days per year of military leave, based on the traditional reserve requirement for one weekend a month and two weeks per year of military duty. However, changes in the requirements for Reservists now require 15 days of military leave annually. He requested that the Commission consider pursuing legislation that would change the current state provision of 10 days of military leave for state employees to 15 days of military leave.

Rep. Pearce asked that Dr. Corson and Mr. Barthlemow provide information on actions that Missouri could take to enhance the situation for military personnel. In particular the Commission would like to have examples of what other states are doing that could be best practice models for Missouri. They specifically mentioned that the Illinois has done an excellent job (Family Relief Fund), and Kansas as state that have good programs in place.

Commission Business Meeting

Education of Military Dependents Task Force

Mr. Welling moved and Mr. Borchelt 2nd the motion that the following individuals serve on the Task Force:

Chair: Mr. Kent D. Thomas, West Plains
Dana Cass, Knob Noster; Representing: Knob Noster School Board
Dr. Judene Blackburn, Waynesville; Representing: Waynesville School District
Judy Castro, Fort Leonard Wood; Representing: Fort Leonard Wood
Rachel Wheeler, Whiteman Air Force Base, Representing: Whiteman Air Force Base
Ronald L. Taylor, Jefferson City, Representing: MO Veterans Comm.
Melissa Randol, Columbia; Representing: Missouri School Boards
Representative David Pearce
Senator Frank Barnitz
Sharon Gulick, Jefferson City; representing: MO Dept. of Economic Development

Motion approved.

As background, Chair Wright explained that families on the two major military installations were asked to comment on issues and concerns they had with Missouri rules and regulations that impact them. From that exercise several issues were identified, with the relationship with the local school boards being among the top issues. At the Commission's November 2nd meeting, it was requested by the local school boards that the Commission seek non-legislative solutions and try to create local solutions and that legislation would be sought only when local resolution isn't feasible.

Examples of problems include students being required to repeat government courses, not being allowed to participate in sports and in extreme cases being required to repeat an entire year of high school.

The Task Force's scope of work will be limited to issues related to military dependent's education and representation on local school board. Issues related to BRAC and similar concerns are outside the scope of this task force.

The Task Force is to report its recommendations to the Commission at its next meeting. Any recommended legislation would probably come in the 2007 session. It was agreed that since the impact aid that goes into many of these school districts is the majority of their funding, the district should be accommodating to the needs of the military dependents. It was suggested that what may need to happen is the establishment of an ombudsman in the impacted school districts.

Mrs. Wheeler said that she felt that just the action of creating this task force and addressing the issues will have a major impact on the families. Mr. Barthelmow asked that the issue and needs of the children of deployed Missouri National Guard be considered by the task force as well.

A packet of information will be prepared and sent to the task force members in preparation for their first meeting.

It was requested that the Department of Economic Development prepare a news release on the task force, members and their role.

Missouri Bankers Association response re foreclosures and active military personnel

Question was raised if this is as serious a problem as is being suggested. Ms. Kerr reported that they are dealing with several cases, but agreed that many of the mortgage and loans are with Internet banks and out of state banks. Sgt. Wake discussed his own experience with having his home sold while he was deployed in Iraq.

Mr. Welling asked if it is possible to increase the moratorium on foreclosures. Concern was that this would position Missouri differently from all other states. Rep. Pearce reported that he had visited with many of the statewide financial groups and it would appear that a change to the state foreclosure laws would be opposed. He recommended that we continue to work with the Missouri Bankers Association to identify solutions before we seek to change state statutes. It was also pointed out that many of the foreclosures are being done by out-of-state banks and internet banks.

Gen. Sidwell said that he is reluctant to create an unfriendly business climate for the banks and prefers a less intrusive change, perhaps looking at some type of fund that can help the families financially.

Sgt. Wake said that he was not aware of his rights as soldier and agreed with Mr. Welling that education of military personnel on their rights was one of the solutions.

Rep. Witte asked if one of the Veteran's check-off funds would be the solution as the fund could help with a grant or loan to the soldier. Ms. Kerr said that, as designed, the funds are not intended to provide this type of assistance. However, since they are being developed she will take the idea back to the board to discuss.

It was agreed to table the issue and take up again at our next meeting to discuss in more detail and have the MBA back to try and work out a resolution. General Sidwell will investigate and determine the extent of the problem within the Missouri National Guard.

Report on meeting with Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Missouri Defense Business Council

Ms. Gulick reported that the Hawthorn Foundation is creating leadership councils that will focus on specific industries with the goals of identifying issues of importance to the industry and to explore options for expanding the jobs and investment in Missouri within the specific industry. A homeland security/defense industry council is being formed and it is anticipated that the first meeting will be held in March or April.

Ms. Gulick requested that a member of the MMPEC be appointed to serve on the Council. It was recommended that Craig Borchelt represent the Commission. Sharon will talk with him about the time commitment and goals.

Review of proposed legislation

Ms. Gulick provided the members with a list of bills that have been filed to date that relate to issues of potential interest to the Commission. She will provide a regular update to the members on the progress of these bills.

Rep. Pearce, Witte, et. al., have filed HB1398 that addresses the Commission's four key issues:

- Zoning issues at Whiteman Air Force Base
- MMPEC chair on Veteran's Commission
- Children of military personnel starting kindergarten if they have completed an accredited pre-K program in another state
- Provisional certification of teachers who are the spouse of a member of the armed forces stationed in Missouri who has relocated from another state.

Rep. Pearce reported that Sen. Koster has filed legislation (SB898) that mirrors HB1398

It was agreed that as chair, Dalton Wright will represent the Commission at any hearings.

Other Business

Mr. Borchelt reported that the Army has requested \$2 million to construct a building at Ft. Knox, despite the Army's assurances during the BRAC hearings that they wouldn't need the funding for the building. Missouri's congressional delegation has promised to oppose the funding request.

Next Meeting

Next regular meeting will be held May 24th in Jefferson City, beginning at 10:30 a.m. in Room 470 of the Governor Office Building. If necessary a conference call will be called in the interim.

Adjourn

Mr. Thomas moved and Mr. Borchelt 2nd the motion to adjourn. Meeting adjourned.

Minutes Approved:



24 May 2006

Dalton Wright, Chair

Date